

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O:MTANNER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 054262

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 054262 ACTION JERUSALEM DATED 11 MAR 75

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 054262

TOSEC 323

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINT, PO

SUBJECT: INR ASSESSMENT OF PORTUGUESE SITUATION

1. AS YOU KNOW FROM LISBON CABLES WHICH WE UNDERSTAND ARE BEING RPEATED TO YOU, A POSSIBLE COUNTER-COUP ATTEMPT WAS LAUNCHED IN LISBON SHORTLY BEFORE MOON LISBON TIME TODAY. REPORTS ARE SO FRAGMENTARY AS TO PREVENT PRECISE IDENTIFICATION OF ACTORS, OR ESTIMATE DIRECTION OF FUTURE EVENTS, BUT BELOW WE ATTEMPT TO RECONSTRUCT WHAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED AND MAY BE HAPPENING FOR WHATEVER USE IT MAY BE TO YOU.

2. SOME PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE UNITS, INCLUDING PARATROOPS, AND SOME ARMY COMMANDOS, ATTACKED THE 1ST ARTILLARY REGIMENT HEADQUARTERS NEAR LISBON AIRPORT. MOST OF THE ACTION REPORTED SO FAR INVOLVED SMALL ARMS FIRE ON THE GROUND, BUT SOME BOMBS WERE DROPPED.

3. BY 3P.M. LISBON TIME, AN EMBASSY OFFICIAL AT THE AIR-
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PORT REPORTED THAT 12 MEN WERE WOUNDED IN THE ATTACK ON THE

ARTILLERY BARRACKS, AND THAT ABOUT 200 OTHER DEFENDERS RAN OUT AND TOOK REFUGE IN A NEARBY APARTMENT COMPLEX. THERE THEY WERE REPORTEDLY JOINED BY MEMBERS OF TWO EXTREME LEFTIST CIVILIAN ORGANIZATIONS.

4. REPORTS OF THE SITUATION AT OTHER MILITARY UNITS INCLUDE:

-- THE 7TH CAVALRY HEADQUARTERS IN LISBON APPEARS NORMAL.

-- THERE IS A REPORT OF SOME KIND OF ACTIVITY AT THE AMADORA COMMANDO GARRISON, JUST OUTSIDE LISBON.

-- ACCORDING TO A UPI REPORT, ARMORED UNITS FROM SANTAREM, 40 MILES NORTHEAST OF LISBON, HAVE ALSO JOINED THE "REBELLION."

-- THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE CONTINENTAL OPERATIONAL COMMAND (COPCON), HEADED BY GENERAL CARVALHO, WAS REPORTEDLY STRAFED BY TWO JETS.

5. THE EMBASSY HAS REPORTED THAT LISBON ITSELF REMAINS CALM WITH TRAFFIC MOVING AND PEOPLE IN THE STREETS.

6. LISBON AIRPORT IS REPORTEDLY CLOSED TO INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC. ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT, IT IS CONTROLLED BY PARATROOPS. ACCORDING TO ANOTHER, IT IS OCCUPIED BY ELEMENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (MFA).

7. LISBON UNIVERSITY IS SAID TO BE SURROUNDED BY TROOPS (UNIDENTIFIED) AND PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES HAVE REPORTEDLY CLOSED THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE BORDER.

8. SO FAR WE HAVE RECEIVED NO REPORTS THAT LISBON BROADCASTING FACILITIES OR KNOWN HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED. BOTH WOULD APPEAR TO BE PRIMARY TARGETS IN ANY COUP ATTEMPT.

9. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BROADCAST A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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INCLUDING ONE BY PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES, AND ONE BY PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES, INDICATING THAT A COUP ATTEMPT BY ELEMENTS VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS "REACTIONARIES," "PARATROOPERS," AND "ARMED FORCES UNITS" HAD BEEN PUT DOWN AND THAT THE SITUATION WAS UNDER CONTROL.

10. EMBASSY LISBON REPORTED THAT AS OF 3:30 P.M. LISBON TIME, "IT APPEARS THAT WHATEVER WAS ATTEMPTED VIA ATTACK

AT AIRPORT HAS FIZZLED."

11. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS IS ANY ONE OF THE COUNTER-COUP ATTEMPTS ABOUT WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED FREQUENT REPORTS RECENTLY. IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE RELATED TO RECENT REPORTING OF A POSSIBLE INVASION OF PORTUGAL BY CONSERVATIVE PORTUGUESE MILITARY ELEMENTS BASED IN SPAIN.

12. WHATEVER THE MOTIVATION AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CURRENT ACTIVITY ARE, IF REPORTS SO FAR AVAILABLE ARE ACCURATE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT MODERATE, REPORTEDLY PRO-SPINOLA FORCES (THE AIR FORCE, PARATROOPS, COMMANDOS, ARMORED UNITS FROM SANTAREM) HAVE MOVED AGAINST A REPORTEDLY MORE RADICAL AND PRO-CARVALHO UNIT, THE ARTILLERY REGIMENT.

13. ONE UNCONFIRMED REPORT HAS IT THAT THE ATTACK ON THIS REGIMENT CAME ABOUT AS THE RESULT OF CARVALHO'S REFUSAL TO STEP DOWN AFTER BEING FIRED BY THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF THE MFA -- AN ACTION THAT WOULD BE IN LINE WITH RECENT REPORTS OF NEWLY ACQUIRED "MUSCLE" BY "MODERATES." IF THIS IS TRUE, THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ATTACKING UNITS COULD BE LIMITED TO THE REMOVAL OF CARVALHO AND OTHERS LIKE HIM. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE REPORTEDLY WIDENING DIVISIONS BETWEEN "MODERATES" AND "RADICALS" IN TENSE, PRE-ELECTION PORTUGAL, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO CONFINE AN OPERATION SUCH AS TODAY'S TO SUCH LIMITED OBJECTIVES.

14. ACCORDING TO A LISBON DOMESTIC BROADCAST AT 5:30 P.M. LISBON TIME, SPINOLA AND GALVAO DE MELO, FORMER JUNTA MEMBER, HAD LEFT PORTUGAL FOR PARTS UNKNOWN. INGERSOLL
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